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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 083798

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TAGS: [OVIP](#) [KOUYATE](#) [LANSANA](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: Secretary Rice's June 7th, 2007, conversation
with Guinean Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by: AF Acting A/S Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Reasons 1.4 (b) and d)

[1](#)2. (U) June 7, 2007, 10:00 am, Washington, DC.

[1](#)3. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Secretary
PA Sean McCormack
AF PDAS Linda Thomas-Greenfield
DRL DAS Jeff Krilla
AF/W Notetaker

GUINEA
Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate
Ousmane Dore, Minister of Economics and Finance
Mamady Traore, Minister of Industry and Commerce

Ousmane Afia Diallo, Chief of Staff for the Prime Minister
Aboubacar Koulibaly, Counselor for the Prime Minister

[1](#)4. (C) SUMMARY. In a frank discussion of Guinea's recent turmoil, Prime Minister Kouyate described the challenges his government faces in implementing reform and improving conditions for the Guinean people. Defining responsibility as "the ability to respond," Kouyate outlined his government's efforts to develop the capacity to address the people's desperate needs. Kouyate appealed to the Secretary for continued U.S. assistance, particularly on security sector reform and promoting youth employment. Noting Guinea's need for Kouyate's optimistic leadership style, the Secretary assured the Prime Minister that the United States would continue to support Guinea's efforts to remain stable and to move toward democratic and transparent government. END SUMMARY.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

[1](#)5. (U) Throughout the discussion, Kouyate described the need to balance managing the people's expectations and signaling the government's dedication to change. In the weeks following his return to Conakry, Kouyate plans to send Finance Minister Dore to present the government's budget for 2007 to the National Assembly. Kouyate noted that when we came to office the National Assembly had assumed that the unrest and strained government coffers would prevent the government from presenting a 2007 budget. Instead the National Assembly asked that Kouyate make a concerted effort to present a 2008 budget. Kouyate, however, decided to push forward with a 2007 budget to demonstrate his administration's effort to break from past practices of fiscal irresponsibility. Similarly with the postponed legislative elections, Kouyate explained that despite the destruction of administrative facilities in 30 of Guinea's 33 prefectures, his

government will "pay any price" to avoid postponing the elections a second time. Kouyate asked for U.S. electoral assistance to help address Guinea's lack of administrative capacity.

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

¶6. (C) Among the various challenges Guinea faces, Kouyate identified the security sector as having the greatest need for U.S. assistance. Because the Army was doing the work of civilian police, Kouyate noted, the civilian population was exposed to excessive violence. Restructuring and reforming the military were further complicated by the deep generational gap between the older ranking officers and their younger junior counterparts. Kouyate noted that some of the officers who joined the military following independence some fifty years ago remain in the military, resulting in fewer opportunities for young officers to rise through the ranks. He emphasized that reforming the military must be done in an open and transparent process to prevent military personnel from thinking they would be demobilized without the means to earn a living. Citing the Liberian and Sierra Leonean demobilization programs as examples, Kouyate sought assistance in finding ways to demobilize Guinea's bloated army by creating non-military employment opportunities. Assuring Kouyate of U.S. support, the Secretary told Kouyate that the U.S. would

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work with Guinea to support his government's efforts.

MINING CONCESSIONS REVIEW

¶7. (C) Without referring to specific concession agreements, Kouyate briefly addressed his government's controversial efforts to review the mining and mineral concessions signed by the previous governments. While acknowledging that some of the previous ministers were notoriously corrupt, Kouyate affirmed that the agreements were legal and would be honored by his government. He further argued, however, that the companies and the government have a common interest in reviewing the agreements. Citing the government's inability to respond to the demands of the people as the reason for the recent violence, Kouyate noted that Alcoa lost approximately \$32 million in revenue during the unrest. Admitting that he will not be able to please everyone, Kouyate assured the Secretary that his government would try to remain

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objective in its attempts to ensure that the agreements provide sufficient revenue sharing to help provide the government of Guinea with the ability to respond. Emphasizing the importance of Guinea remaining objective, the Secretary commented that if Guinea treats other fairly, Guinea would be treated similarly.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

¶8. (U) Describing Guinea's recent turmoil, Kouyate commented that Guinea's youth would no longer tolerate the gap between Guinea's economic potential and its impoverished reality. Noting that fifty percent of Guinea's youth are unemployed, Kouyate stated that he was shocked to see that after years of tolerating unacceptable conditions, the youth were now willing to sacrifice their lives for the chance at a better future. Kouyate announced that he planned to hold a "Youth Day" in which he will meet youth representatives to discuss mobilizing

the country to identify ways to improve youth employment opportunities. Kouyate further clarified that his government must look outside of Conakry for employment options in order to avoid concentrating Guinea's unemployed youth in the capital.

19. (U) Looking to Guinea's education system, Kouyate noted that as with all other areas of government services, corruption and a lack of infrastructure have limited the government's capacity. Noting the First Lady's Education Initiative, Kouyate thanked the Secretary for the USAID education advisor's recent trips to Guinea, and welcomed both the Secretary and the education advisor to future visits to Conakry.
RICE